



A DOILU CONGRESU AL  
PEN TSENTRUL  
ARMANESCU  
- PROTA CONFERENTSIA DI  
BELIGRADI TI ARMANJLI  
12-14 DI XUMEDURU 2022

ДРУГИ КОНГРЕС  
ЦИНЦАРСКОГ  
ПЕН ЦЕНТРА  
- ПРВА БЕОГРАДСКА  
КОНФЕРЕНЦИЈА О ЦИНЦАРИМА  
12.-14. ОКТОБРА 2022.

**Raoul Blindenbacher**

## **WELCOME PRESENTATION ON THE FIRST BELGRADE CONFERENCE ON ARMÃNS**

Dear Lila Cona, President of the Armãns PEN Centre,  
Dear ladies, and gentlemen,

In the name of the Board of Directors of the Convivenza Foundation, the International Centre of Minorities, it is my great honour to welcome you to the First Belgrade Conference on ARMÃNS in Belgrade, Serbia. With pleasure the foundation agreed to jointly organize this important event with the Armãns PEN Centre! At this occasion I would like to give my special gratitude to my friend Lila Cona, President of the Armãns PEN Centre, for the excellent collaboration in the making of this conference.

As you can imagine, I would have greatly wished to be with you today, and please accept my deepest regrets and apology not to be present. The good news, however, is that the Vice President and founding father of the Convivenza Foundation, Romedi Arquint, is participating at the event and will share with you his rich and lifelong experiences about diversity and minorities in general as well as the foundations views.

To begin with, let me felicitate the Armãns PEN Centre to become a full member of PEN International, an amazing organization dedicated to defending free expression, protecting writers at risks, and promoting linguistic rights – just to mention a few objectives of the PEN Charter. These are all objectives, which highly overlap with the Convivenza deeds, in which the foundation declares its fundamental conviction to actively engage to improve cultural, linguistic, and religious minority rights worldwide.

For fifteen years by now, the Convivenza Foundation became a recognized international non-profit organization by Swiss law, offering non-partisan

expertise and a dialogue platform to develop and implement solutions for minority and diversity issues, so far mainly in Europe. The Foundation operates based on the Governmental Learning Spiral, a method that enhances solution finding for diversity and minority challenges through innovation and learning. It does this by organizing results-based roundtables, workshops and conferences grounded on the organizations method as well as by publishing the results of these events in the foundations very own book series.

However, by doing so, we are fully aware, that improving minorities lives and institutions is only possible, if there are people and associations who are ready to speak out publicly and to write about injustice and discrimination in the first place. As we all know, to do so, requires a high amount of courage and in some places even the readiness to put an individual's own life at risk. We therefore applaud organizations like the International PEN Centres, who engage themselves and support such brave persons and groups.

Today's conference is a follow-up event of a seminar about «the protection of autochthonous people without their own state» organized by the Convivenza Foundation, in Müstair, Switzerland, almost a year ago. The seminar was organized in collaboration with EURAC Research and conducted under the auspice of the Council of Europe and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. The results of the seminar were summarized in the Müstair Declaration, which I warmly recommend reading at the foundations website. They will be also published in Volume 6 of the foundations book series shortly, a publication we are happy to share with you when asked for.

To conclude my short welcome remarks, I would like to underline the Convivenza Foundations willingness to continue to collaborate with the PEN Centres in our joint conviction to secure the linguistic, religious, and cultural rights of small communities in speaking, writing and foremost action.

I therefore wish you fruitful and lively discussions in the upcoming three conference days and send you my very best regards,

sincerely yours,

Dr. Raoul Blindenbacher

President Convivenza Foundation